

Full and Impartial

ACCOUNT

Of all the

ROBBERIES

Committed by

JOHN HAWKINS, GEORGE SYMPSON,
(lately Executed for Robbing
the *Bristol* Mails) and their
Companions.

Particularly the Robbing of General *Evans*
on *Putney-Common*, where his Man
was killed; the Robbing the *Bristol*,
Worcester, *Oxford*, *Bath*, *Gloucester*,
Ipswich, *Bury*, &c. Stage-Coaches; as
also, the Earl of *Burlington* and Lord
Bruce: With the Case of *Butler Fox*,
who was Executed for Robbing Colonel
Archibald Hamilton; and the Robberies
of the Earl of *Westmoreland*, and others,
in the Streets in and about *London*; and
Remarks on the Tryal of the above
Persons.

With an Account of *Hawkins's* defacing several
Pictures in the *Bodleian Library* at *Oxford*:
With a proposed Project of Robbing the
Harwich Mail.

Written by RALPH WILSON, late one of
their Confederates.

THE SECOND EDITION.

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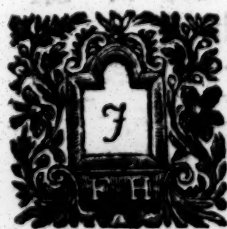
THE
OFFICE OF THE
SHERIFF
COUNTY OF
NEW YORK
IN SENATE
JANUARY 1891

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A Full and Impartial Account of all the Robberies committed by JOHN HAWKINS, GEORGE SYMPSON, and their Companions.



JOHN Hawkins, who by his many Robberies has made himself as famous in *England* as *Cartouche* was in *France*, at his Death was 30 Years old : He was born of very honest Parents, but poor ; his Father was a Farmer, and lived at *Staines* in *Middlesex*. His Education had been but very slender, for at 14 he waited on a Gentleman ; but leaving him, he became Tapster's Boy at the *Red-Lyon* at *Brentford*, where he continued till he got another Gentleman's Service : but being of an unsettled Temper, he seldom tarried long in a Place. The last Family he was in, was Sir *Dennis Dutry's*, whom he served as Butler : He has often told me, if he had continued in that Station, he might soon have been Master of very happy Circumstances ; for being an handsome

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creditable Servant, he was well liked and approved of both by his Master and Lady. But as he was conscious of those his personal Perfections, like all the Gentry of the Blue-Cloth, he soon became very assuming, so that he thought it but a small Fault to be out two or three Nights in a Week at the Gaming-Tables, which were his Destruction, as they are of all others who frequent them. These are the Nurseries of all our Highway-men: here it is that young Fellows being stript of all their Money, are prepared for the most desperate Enterprizes. So it was with *Hawkins*, who by the repeated Neglects of his Master's Business, having incensed the Family against him, was turned off, not without a just Suspicion of having first been a Confederate in robbing his Master's House of a considerable Value in Plate. This he never owned to me, but acknowledged he had pawned an old-fashioned piece of *Dutch* Plate of Sir *Dennis's*, which he valued very much.

Having spoiled his Character, he looked no more after a Place; attending the Gaming-Tables was all his Business, till he was reduced to such Necessity that he wanted Bread. In this melancholy Condition, the Devil, who is ever ready upon such Occasions, put it into his Head that he must relieve himself by plundering his Fellow-Subjects. This he resolved to do, and, in order thereto, musters all his Interest to procure an Horse and a Case of Pistols.

He was now 24. His first Expedition was to *Hounslow-Heath*, where he stopp'd a Coach, and eased the Passengers of about 11 £. With this Booty he returned safe to *London*. Now every body wou'd imagine that he, who so lately had tasted of the bitter Cup of Affliction, wou'd have

have applied this Money to a proper Use: instead of that, he repaired immediately to the *King's-Head* by *Trade-Bar*, and threw it all off.

Thus he went on a pretty while by himself, losing at Play what he got upon the Highway.

In process of Time he associated himself with many others. His first Companions were one *Ryley*, *Commerford*, *Reeves*, and a certain *Irish* Captain, who has given the Government a great deal of Trouble upon another account; with these he committed several Robberies upon *Bagshot* and *Hounslow-Heath*s, but never cou'd keep any Money, the fatal Itch of Gaming sweeping all away, so that very frequently he has been put to his Shifts how to get a Dinner. His Practice in such Poverty, was, to go into a convenient Tavern for bilking with his Companions, where they eat and drank to their Satisfaction; when the Reckoning came to be paid, they drew Lots who should be left behind to stand the Bears for the rest, that is, when the rest were gone, to make the best of his way off without discovery. I think this very much resembles a Custom great Travellers tell you they have aboard of a Ship, when, in a great Famine, the Sailors cast Lots who shall be eaten for the Support of his Brethren.

Hawkins had followed this sort of Life about two Years, when he was apprehended by his Majesty's Messengers for attempting to rescue Captain *Lennard*, but was discharged presently after. He had been but a few Days out of Custody, before three of his Companions were seized at *Guildford*; he had been with them, but he could not get a Horse. Two of them, viz. *Reeves* and *Commerford*, were executed, and *Ryley*

was transported; and the Government has taken care of the fourth, whom I mentioned before.

Hawkins being now left by himself, was more constantly at the Gaming-Tables; where, about this Time, it was my Misfortune to be introduced by an Acquaintance, purely out of Curiosity to see the Nature of those Places; a most fatal one to me! and whenever I reflect upon my most unhappy Circumstances, that Curiosity rises uppermost, as the Cause of all. I admire the *Westminster M——y* don't suppress those Places. Certainly, they could not demonstrate their Affection to his Majesty better, than by putting the many good Laws in Execution which are provided against Gaming? by doing of which, they would, in a few Years, save the Lives of Hundreds of the King's Subjects. But why do I wonder, when I know that the Tables subsist under the Protection of such Powerful Advocates! There is a yearly Alliance between them, which generally expires about *Christmas*; at which time the Advocates raise all their Forces, and join some Christian Companies of informing Constables; and being thus appointed for some notable Expedition, their first Exploit is upon the Three-peny Gaming-Tables, such as the *King's-Head*, the *Hole* in the *Hay-Market*, and the *Hole* in *Drury-lane Play-house* Passage, from whence they drag away a dozen or two of needy Pick-pockets. This is a sufficient Alarm to the Governors of greater Places, who dispatch their Emisseries with Gifts to these formidable Enemies of Vice, all is hush'd up, and the Alliance renewed.

I shall now say something of myself. I am now 22, and was brought up at *Kirkleatham* in *Cleveland, Yorkshire*, at the School built there by *Sir William Turner*, formerly Lord-Mayor of *London*. At 17 I left the School, and was put Clerk to *Mr. Dixon* of *Lincoln's-Inn*, a very eminent and honest Practitioner in Chancery, whose Advice, if I had observed, no doubt I had at this Day been very happy. But his Business being very great, and my Industry at that time very little, we could not agree: in short, *Mr. Dixon* returned the Money he received at our Articling, and so we parted.

Amongst the rest of my Acquaintance at the Gaming-Tables, I was singled out by this *John Hawkins*; we became great Cronies, and were very seldom asunder, till he was taken upon suspicion of robbing a Coach in *Monmouth-street*, of which he was acquitted, tho guilty. My Mother at this time being reconciled to me, sent for me home to *Whitby*, where she lives. With her I tarried a Twelvemonth; but being very desirous of coming to *London* again, I persuaded her to send me up, to try the Law once more. She, who always encouraged any thing that looked like Business in me, agreed to my Request, and gave 100 *l.* with me to *Mr. Sandys* of *Grange-Court*. I had not been long with him before my old Infection broke out, which swept away every thing I had, both Money and Clothes. By this Extravagance making myself unfit for a Clerk, I left *Mr. Sandys*. Then it was I again met with my old Friend *John Hawkins*: as yet I did not know directly what Courses he followed, tho knowing he had no Support from any Relations, I suspected him very much; for which reason I began to withdraw

draw myself from his company, for even at that time no Man had a greater Abhorrence of Villany than myself.

Hawkins had now engaged with a fresh Gang which was pretty numerous, one of which, *Pocock*, being apprehended, (according to Custom) impeach'd all the rest. This Impeachment dispersed the whole Company, some to *Ireland*, others to *Wales*; and one *Ralphson*, to whose Charge, as a trusty Person, all the Moveables were committed, thought it his best play to move off with the Company's Stock into *Holland*. By this Fraud, and the Impeachment, *Hawkins* was left destitute both of Money and Companions, for every body had got out of Town, except his Brother *Will. Hawkins* and *James Wright*; the first was taken upon *Pocock's* Information, and the last was in a Salvation. *Hawkins* himself skulk'd about the Town, not daring to appear where he was known, except at such Houses as he could confide in; one of which I used, and there it was I was first in his company after this Matter broke out; for he having a great opinion that I would not prejudice him for the sake of Reward, was not afraid to see me. In a few days *Hawkins* and I were together as often as ever, from whom I learnt every thing I have related. Some things I have omitted, as that he was present when Colonel *Floyer* shot *Woodridge*; he told me also that it was he that shot General *Evans's* Servant: he has often lamented his Misfortune, that he should be guilty of that Murder. He would, when he got into Company with a Clergyman, or any other learned Person, be always asking some casuistical Questions upon Cases parallel to his own, which was this: *Hawkins* stopt
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the General and another Gentleman in a Coach, with this Footman behind ; the General fired at him, and so did the Gentleman: upon this, *Hawkins* shot directly into the Coach at them, but killed the Footman behind. Now *Hawkins* fancy'd this was no Murder, because he had no design against the Deceased. But he was always told his Design against the Master made him as culpable as if he had intended it against the Man, whom he killed peradventure. I was very fond of *Hawkins's* Company, because I took much pleasure in hearing him speak of his merry Pranks and many Robberies. *Wright* being now recover'd, he and *Hawkins* fell to their old Game, and when they came home at Night, I used to drink with them. The first Robbery they committed after this Re-union, was upon the Earl of *Burlington* and Lord *Bruce* in *Richmond-Lane*; they took from them 20*l.* two Gold Watches, and a Saphire Ring, which my Lord bid 100*l.* for to *Wild*. This Ring *Hawkins* pretended he could sell only for six Pound; this seemed to the poor Fellow to be a very good Price, so that he gladly accepted of 3*l.* for his Snack, tho *Hawkins* afterwards sold the same Ring in *Holland* for 40*l.*

This *Wright* was born of very honest Parents, and bred a Barber; he was a Man of the best Temper and greatest Fidelity to his Companions I ever knew in an Highwayman: how he became acquainted with *Hawkins*, I cannot say, but they two went on together after his Salvation for about a Month very prosperously before I engaged with them. It happen'd about this time, that meeting with a good-natur'd Countryman, I borrowed 20*l.* of him; this was a great Novelty to me, who had been starving for
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some Weeks past, notwithstanding that I made all the haste I could to the Tables, and lost it every Farthing. This ill Luck made me rage like a Madman, and was the first thing that made me capable of any Impression from bad Company. From the Gaming-Tables, I went to *Hawkins* and *Wright*. We had drunk ourselves to a good pitch, when *Hawkins* began a Discourse about robbing in the Streets, but said it could not be done without a third Man, and ask'd me if I durst take a Pistol, and mount a Horse: I told him, Yes, as well as any Man, and that the want of Money had made me ready for any thing. Upon this, he who was always glad of new Companions, and, I am satisfy'd, with a very bad Intent, offered very kindly to get me a Horse against the next Night; I consented, and so we went to bed. The next Morning I remembred what pass'd the Night before, but resolv'd nothing less than to put what I had promised in execution: however, *Hawkins* was as good as his word.

When the Night came, we fell to drinking again, and at a proper time of the Night *Hawkins* told us all was ready; I being now as hot as the last Night, and so in the same Humour, objected nothing, but went away with them to the Horses: we mounted about ten a-clock, and a little while after robbed Sir *David Dalrymple* by *Winstanley's* Water-works. It was put upon me to stop the Coach by way of tryal, whether I was capable of being made a Man of Business; to my great Misfortune, I performed my part so well, that *Hawkins* never cared to part with me afterwards.

We had but a very small Booty from Sir *David*, I think about 3 *l.* in Money, a Snuff-box
and

and Pocket-book, which Sir *David* offered 60 l. for to *Wild*; but we returned it by a Porter *gratis*, for we never dealt with *Wild*, neither did he know any of us.

The next Morning after this Robbery, it is impossible for me to express under what Anxieties I labour'd, on a consideration that I had engaged in such base Actions which I then apprehended, as I have found since, bring nothing but Poverty and Shame to him that follows them: Besides, there is no Life so gloomy as the Life of an Highwayman; he is a Stranger to Peace of Mind and quiet Sleep; he is made a Property of, by every Villain that knows or guesses at his Circumstances: such a Life is a Hell to any Man that has ever had any Relish of a more generous way of living. But I was entred, and must go thorough; for *Jack Hawkins*, who before was all good Humour and Complaisance, was now become my Tyrant: he gave himself a great deal of trouble to let me know, that I was as liable to be hang'd as he, and in all his Actions express'd a Satisfaction that he had me under a hank. I have great reason to believe that this Pleasure of his did arise from his having one more added to his Number, to make use of when his Occasions required. The World may think I speak this to justify what I have lately done, but when they shall be apprized how vilely his Brother has acted that part, and that such a Method of saving their Lives was always concerted beforehand between the two Brothers, they will be of another opinion. In short, after this Robbery I led a Dog's Life, and was much against my will obliged to take every thing in good part,

for fear, by quarelling, of bringing us all into trouble.

The next Coach we robb'd, was *Mr. Hide's* of *Hackney*; we had from him ten Pounds, and a Watch: *Mr. Hide* has told me since, that he had about him at that time 300*l.* in *Bank Notes*, but we miss'd them. It would be too tedious to mention all the Robberies we committed, for we seldom failed of doing two or three a Week for a Month together in or about the Town. We seldom went above five Miles from the Town, and when we came into it again, we fell to work with the Coaches in the Streets. One Night in *August 1720.* when all Mankind were turn'd Thieves, we robb'd a Coach against the dead Wall in *Chancery-Lane*, another the same Night in *Lincoln's-In-Fields*; and in going off, we stumbled upon my Lord *Westmoreland* with three Footmen behind his Coach: we robb'd his Lordship, but with a great deal of difficulty, for the Watch poured in upon us from all parts; yet at the Fire of a Pistol over their Heads, they retired as fast, and gave us an opportunity of getting clear.

These Robberies had put me into a good Condition, if the pernicious Itch of Gaming had not been so prevalent upon me; whatever Movables we got, I sold my part to *J. Hawkins* and *Wright*, and play'd away the Money. They two having made up a sufficient Cargo, were determin'd for *Holland*: accordingly *Hawkins* had every thing that belonged to them in his hands, ready to go off with, except a Watch which *Wright* was gone by himself to fetch out of Pawn; we were to meet him at the *Queen's-Head* upon *Tower-Hill*: but a Messenger whom we sent beforehand to see how the land lay, brought us word
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that *Wright* was apprehended by *Jonathan Wild*, to whom he had been betray'd by one of his own Acquaintance. This was a great Alarm to us, for we were under a most violent Apprehension that *Wright* would impeach us, but he proved himself to be quite another Man.

Now *Will. Hawkins* and *Wright* were in Prison together: the first being impeach'd, could not impeach; but the latter, if he had been inclined, might have taken that Advantage to have saved his Life: but he told *Hawkins's* Wife, that he would hurt nobody, much less her Husband, because of his Children. I shall have an Opportunity presently to show how well this Generosity was retaliated. In the mean time, *Jack Hawkins* and I were consulting where to conceal ourselves; at last we pitch'd upon *Oxford*, whither we walk'd a foot, and tarried there a Month: in which time nothing remarkable happen'd, except that *Hawkins* defaced some Pictures in the Gallery above the *Bodleian* Library, for the Discovery whereof the University bid 100*l.* A poor Taylor, who had above measure distinguish'd himself for a Whig, was taken up and imprison'd for this Fact, and very narrowly escaped a Whipping.

By that time we had been a Month at *Oxford*, the Sessions at the *Old-Bailey* were ended; *Will. Hawkins* was discharged, and his Friend *Potock* hanged, but *Wright* was reserved till *Kingston-Affizes*. *Jack Hawkins* being very desirous to see his Brother *Will.* told me he design'd for *London* the next Day, and that he was sorry he could not lend me Money to go along with him, but that he would in two or three Days send me 2*l.* and so he left me full of Poverty and a bad Conscience, two dismal Companions. A

little while after I received ten Shillings from him, six whereof I ow'd at my Quarters, which I paid, and with the rest set forwards to *London* a foot ; when I arrived at *London*, I found that *Jack* and *Will Hawkins* were gone for *Holland* with all *Wright's* Goods to the Value of 50 *l.* which they never gave him any Account of, tho he was then starving in Prison.

About the latter end of *October*, both the Brothers returned from *Holland* to *London*, where we all joined ; the most fatal joining I ever made in my Life, for if I had not joined that heedless Villain *Will. Hawkins*, in all probability I should not have been in this Condition : but this cannot be recalled.

We three went on till *Christmas*, when I became of Age, and in Possession of a small Estate my Father left me, which I sold for 350 *l.* This Money I presently lost, except a part I lent to the two Brothers to buy them Horses with ; I remember this particularly, because they never paid me again. Being all furnish'd with Horses of our own, we fell to Business very industriously ; *Will. Hawkins* we often left behind us as a lazy Coward : this Fellow in Company is one of the most flustering Rascals I ever heard, no Man is so forward to strike another, because he confides in his Strength, and yet no Man was so backward upon the Road ; which proceeded not from a Principle of Honesty, but downright Fear : For these, and divers other good Causes, we broke him out of the Troop very often, or at least suspended him till by his good Behaviour he obtained a Re-admission. One Night his Brother and myself, having excluded him for some of the Offences aforesaid, took a Ride to *Hampstead*, and being in an elevated Condition
with

with Wine, were resolved upon our Return to rob the first Coach we met, let the Consequence be what it would. It happen'd that about 100 Yards on this side of *Fig-Lane*, towards *St. Giles's* Turnpike, we met a Chariot with two bright Gentlemen in it; as soon as ever they past us, we muffled up with Cape and Handkerchief, and overtook them at the end of *Fig-Lane*: at the first word the Coachman stopt, and down went the Sashes; I was on one side, and *Hawkins* on the other. The Gentlemen put their Bodies out of the Coach, and fired both at once; one of them lodged three Slugs in *Hawkins's* Shoulder, but the other miss'd me: They certainly were brave Men, yet I think their hasty Fire was a sign of Fear; for if they had suffer'd us to have come close to them, they must have shatter'd us all to pieces. The Report of the Fire-Arms had made a great Alarm, so that we thought it our best way to move off, to prevent Murder on both sides; for they went out with a Resolution not to be robb'd, and we went out not to kill.

This Action was succeeded by such bad Weather, that we could not get a Farthing; and when good Weather came, our Horses Heads being swelled, we could not get them out of the Stable. In this Disaster every Man's Wits were at work how to proceed for a Livelihood, at last we agreed to go and rob the Coaches in *Hide-Park* a-foot. The first Coach we attempted in *Hide-Park* was *Mr. Green's* the Brewer, but the Coachman seeing us only Footmen, whipt away, and left us, for we were not expert in this sort of Work; however, I shot one of his Horses, and in endeavouring to fire again, I shot myself thro the Hand, which made my Retreat

treat very difficult, as having the Walls to get over.

Being now spoilt for either Horse or Foot, I had time enough to reflect upon my most deplorable Condition; I recollected what I was once, and what then! I found that such a Course of Life must be finish'd with great Scandal at *Tyburn*, and that God Almighty's Vengeance would overtake us, and that suppose he was an unconcerned Spectator of such Actions, that the Nature of our Crimes would not admit of a better Fate. Upon the whole I concluded, my best way was to leave the Town, and thereby all my Follies: I had no sooner taken this Resolution, but I put it in execution, for I borrow'd a little Money of a Friend, took my Horse out of the Stable, and so set forwards to *Yorkshire*, *February 1. 1721.*

It is impossible to express my Satisfaction in leaving the Town, or how much I detested those Actions I had been lately guilty of, or the Sincerity of my Resolutions never to relapse, let my Fortune in the World be what it would. Thus prepared for an honest Life, I arrived at *Whitby*, where I was well entertained; in a few Days I fell into my Mother's Business, which is very considerable: this I followed with the greatest Diligence till the *August* following; some time in that Month I was sent for to a Publick House in our Town by two Gentlemen, whom, to my great Surprise, I found to be my old Friend *John Hawkins*, and his new Companion *George Sympson*. After first Compliments, *Hawkins* and I took a Walk together; upon an Examination of their Affairs, I found out several things which look'd poorly on my side; as that they had not above 2*l.* in Money between them, and the

like: I expostulated with him the reason of his taking so long a Journey so poorly provided, into a Place where he could have no Assistance. This displeased him very much, so that he swore and raged like a Fury; he told me, I had been like other Men, and was now as liable as any body: he added, that his Brother had impeach'd me, and every body else of his Companions, and that I should be fetch'd away in a few Days. This startled me very much, so that I agreed to go along with them: I bought *Sympson's* part of some Goods they brought along with them, which came to 20 *l.* and I lent *Hawkins* 20 *l.* we all bought Horses, and so we came to *London*, where I found that I was not impeach'd, as *Hawkins* had told me, neither was his Brother in Custody. By this you may perceive the Spirit of Envy, which reigns in such Men towards their Companions, who betake themselves to an honest Life, and desert their Villanies.

This Joke preceded the Truth but a very little, for in a short time after *Will. Hawkins* was taken by *Sir Edward Lawrence's* Servants, whom he and *Butler Fox* had robbed in the *Huntington-Coach*. *Will. Hawkins* impeach'd every body that had been concerned with him, and me amongst the rest; but only *Fox* and *Wright* were apprehended: This is the same *Wright* I left in Prison, labouring under all the Calamities which attend such a Place. He was tried at *Kingston* last Summer-Assizes, but being acquitted, was discharged; after his Discharge he fell to an honest Employment, which he followed till *Hawkins* impeach'd him: He was convicted of a Street-Robbery done upon *Mr. Towers* about two Years ago, and hang'd the 22d of *December* last, and guilty of the Fact. What makes
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me remember the Day, is, because if I had been taken, I should have suffer'd the same Day, which was my Birth-day. It may here be remember'd how well poor *Wright's* Generosity was repaid, he forbore *Hawkins*, to be hang'd by him himself.

Butler Fox was a Porter in *Milkstreet*, had a Wife and three Children; *Will. Hawkins* came acquainted with him at C—— House by *London-Wall*, a Nest for Highwaymen. Upon his Tryal he appeared to have a good Reputation, tho certainly he was guilty of the two Robberies he was acquitted of at the *Old Bailey*, and I am satisfy'd he was never guilty of more. *Will. Hawkins*, after he had drawn this poor Fellow into these two Robberies, made his boast that he had no farther Occasion for him, and when his Necessities required, he would make use of him.

After he was acquitted, which baulk'd the Expectations of Sir *Edward's* Footmen, who took him, they trump'd up the Robbery of Colonel *Arch. Hamilton* against him, which *Jack Hawkins* and *George Sympfson* were guilty of. This *Hawkins* swears himself and *Fox* into the Robbery, tho neither of them were there; notwithstanding that he suffered for it at *Croydon*, declaring with his last Words, that he was innocent. Some People may ask, If *Hawkins* himself was not there, how came he to know so many Circumstances? This is easily answered, for *Hawkins* and *Sympfson* told him every particular that very Night. I have heard *Hawkins* exclaim against his Brother very often both before and after *Fox's* Conviction, for swearing *Fox* into this Robbery, which he and *Sympfson* did, and nobody else. There is one thing that convinces me what they said was true, which is this: When
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Hawkins was ask'd what became of the rifled barrell'd Gun they took from the Colonel, he answered, that he threw it away just after the Robbery. Now this was a Lye to my certain knowledge, for I had that same Gun in my hand last *Christmas*, and saw the Silk they took in *Hawkins's* hands. All that I can say more to this Matter, is, That the Colonel's Coachman had good Eyes, that he could swear to a Man he never saw in his Life before ; I cannot think he had any of the Reward for that Service, which, I believe, was divided amongst Sir *Edward's* Servants.

All this time we play'd least in sight our most convenient House was by *London-Wall* : This Man knew all our Circumstances, and in that Knowledge found his Account, for we seldom committed a Robbery, but he had his Snack by way of Reckoning. We did not mind that, for as he kept a Livery-Stable, we had an Opportunity of getting out at all times in the Night ; so that we harra's'd almost all the Morning Stage-Coaches in *England*. One Morning we robb'd the *Cirencester*, the *Worcester*, the *Glocester*, the *Oxford*, and *Bristol* Stage-Coaches, all together ; the next Morning the *Ipswich* and *Colchester*, and a third Morning perhaps the *Portsmouth* Coach. The *Bury* Coach has been our constant Customer ; I think we have touch'd that Coach ten times : For any of these, we never went further than the *Stones-End* ; if we brought away their Portmanteaus, we carried them to our old Cock C——, where we ransack'd them. I cannot help saying, that as this Man participated of our Prosperity, it is a pity he should not have his Snack of our Adversity ; it would be of infinite Service to the

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Nation, if such a Man could be sent abroad for better Education. He has undone several young Fellows, by spurring them to such Actions as bring them to the Gallows.

Our Evening Exercises were generally between *Hampstead, Hackney, Bow, Richmond,* and *London*, and behind *Buckingham Wall, &c.* We three committed numberless Robberies, for *Sympson* was a stout brisk Man, so that we carried every thing on with great Success, and might have lived in that unhappy Way several Years, if we had not meddled with the Mails, which are certain Destruction to any body that rob them. Not one has escaped yet, that ever meddled with them.

This *Sympson* was about 28, born at *Putney* in *Surrey*, and brought up at *Bevre* in *Lincolnshire*; he was a Man of no Education, and of poor natural Parts: he was never capable of designing any thing, but when cut out for him, no Man was quicker or bolder in the Execution. He had been some time Bailiff of an Hundred in *Lincolnshire*, but for some Misdemeanour flying the Country, he came to *London*, and served my Lord *Castlemain*, and other Gentlemen, in quality of Footman; but not contented with that Station, he never rested till he became acquainted with *Jack Hawkins*, and so commenced one of his Majesty's Collectors for the High Roads.

Hawkins and *Sympson* were the Persons that committed the Robbery on *Richard West Esq;* behind *Buckingham* house, and took a Gold Watch, and several other things to a considerable

considerable Value, for which a great Reward was offered, but never produced.

Nothing particular happened in all these Robberies, except that as we were making up to the *Portsmouth* Coach, a Gentleman upon it fired at us before we spoke to the Coachman. I do not blame him, for certainly our passing them, and then returning upon them, plainly demonstrated what we wanted to be at. We had the same measure meted to us by another Morning Coach, by which my Horse received a Wound, of which he died. One remarkable thing enough has happened to us, and that was, our meeting Mr. *Green* and his Lady behind *Buckingham*-Wall, and robbing them: I call it remarkable, because I told the Coachman when he drove away from us when we were a-foot, that we should have the luck to meet him when we were mounted.

This is the Life we led till the beginning of *April* last, when we began to talk of putting an old Design of robbing the Mails in Execution. This Design was first concerted with the abovesaid C——. He advised that the best way was to begin with the *Harwich* Mail; but that Mail being as uncertain as the Wind, we never agreed to wait for it. At last we pitched upon the *Bristol* Mail, and every thing was prepared accordingly. I endeavoured all I could to hinder this Attempt. I told them, that the Nature of our Circumstances were such, that of necessity we were firmly attached to one another's Interest, as being all impeached together, which hindered any one designing

Person amongst us injuring the other two. That that Union would be dissolved when a Promise of the King's Pardon should be published after such a Robbery, with a Reward as usual. I told them, that the Post-House was indefatigable in their Searches after Men who had robbed them; and lastly, that we should get nothing by it but a Gibbet.

Thus I argued against myself, for nothing but this Accident could have set me free in the World. Notwithstanding all this, we set forwards on *Sunday* the 15th Day of *April*, for the accomplishment of our fatal Project. The next Morning, being *Monday*, we took the Mail; and again on *Wednesday* Morning. The meaning of taking it twice, was to get the halves of some Bank Bills, the first halves whereof we took out of the Mail on *Monday* Morning.

On *Monday* the 23d of *April*, being the *Monday* following that Morning we robbed the Mail the first time. I walked out after Dinner to see my Horse in *Fenchurch-street*; from thence led by an over-ruling Fate, it came into my Head that I would go to C—— to hear what News there. At C——'s I found two or three Men whose Countenances I did not like, which made me withdraw something abruptly. I got clear of the House without any Molestation, and by some bye Alleys I got away undiscovered into *Moorgate* Coffee-house, a House that I much frequented, because as none but sober Company use it, a Highwayman might appear there without suspicion. This Coffee-house, at certain times, we used between two and three Years; but as I was always reserved,
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and had seldom the same Habit, I never was much known. At this time, contrary to my Custom, I fell into a Set of Company, and, amongst the rest, particularly with one who by his outward Mein seemed to be a Quaker. This Person told me, that there was great quest made after the Robbers of the *Bristol* Mail, nay, that there was even then enquiry made after them in their Neighbourhood; and told me in a jocular way; they did not take right Methods of robbing them. Upon this I paid for my Gill, and marched out, not without some reflection upon my Friend's Words. It now came into my head, that the People I saw at C—'s were the Enquirers. After I left the Coffee-house, I went into *Bedlam*, where the many melancholy Objects I saw there inspired me with a thorough Sense of my own worse Condition; for long Experience had informed me, that nothing but Poverty and Destruction, sooner or later, could attend me in that Course of Life. Here I made a thorough Examination into several Passages that happened since our robbing the Mails, which gave me the greatest Grounds to believe it was not safe for me to tarry longer in *London*. For a certain Person, who was more my Friend than theirs, suspecting us to be the Men who robbed the Mails, advised me to get off, or else go immediately to the Post-house, and surrender myself; if I did not, he was well assured *Sympson* would, for that he had asked him several previous Questions tending to such a Design: as, Whether he who stood already Impeached could be an Evidence against any body else? and, Whether a Person that

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went in voluntarily would be detained? and if the *Gazette* meant the 200*l*. Reward to him that discovered, or to him that apprehended? These, and such like Questions, he asked of a Person that he did not imagine would report them to me again. When I heard them, I put a right Construction upon those Enquiries, and to prevent the Effects of them, after a long Consideration in *Bedlam*, I determined to take a Passage for *Newcastle* that very Night, but entirely rejected the last part of my Friend's Advice.

With this Resolution I made towards *Moorgate* Coffee-house again, but in my way was met by the same Men I saw at C——'s. Assoon as I passed them, they turned about and followed me, but not so close, but that I got into the Coffee-house unseen, for they overshot *Moorgate* Arch, so that if I had returned by the same Door I came in at, I had escaped; but I unluckily (or rather luckily) went out at the Fore-door, where they stood watching in the Street. Assoon as they saw me, they seized me. I am very much of Opinion, that C—— had given them some information about me, tho they say they had no other suspicion of me than seeing me at his House, which had been long suspected as an harbour for such Men. After I was apprehended, they carried me to the General Post-Office, where I was examined before the Post-Master General, but he could make nothing of me that Night. The next Morning I was carried before him again four or five times to as little purpose: in short, I had given him my final Answer, that I knew nothing

nothing of the Matter, tho Mr. *Carteret*, before whom I was carried, used the most prevailing Arguments to bring me to a Discovery. But when nothing would do, just as he was preparing to commit me, a Messenger came from *Will. Hawkins*, who is a Prisoner in the *Gatehouse*, to let the Post-house know that he had Impeached me, and that they need not give themselves any trouble about me, for that his Evidence would convict me. At first I looked upon this as an Artifice to draw me to a Confession, but when one of my own Friends confirmed it that there had been such a Messenger, I began to think it was very hard to be hanged by a Man whose Brother's Life I had saved, for I did not value the Post-house, I knew they could have no Evidence against me, notwithstanding that if they by any Circumstances should have thought me the Man, after they had failed themselves, they would have urged *Hawkins's* Evidence against me, as if it had been their own Cause. Still I thought it was hard, that a Man should suffer for his Brother's Roguery, and therefore would not come to a Confession. All the Post-Officers, besides Mr. *Carteret*, were pressing above measure with me, insomuch that it appeared to me that they had as great regard to my Welfare as their own Interest. One of them, in particular, called me aside, and putting his Hand into his Pocket, produced a Letter, and bid me read it, which I did, and found as follows:

SIR,

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I *Am one of the Persons who robbed the Mails, which I am sorry for; and to make amends, I'll secure my two Companions as soon as may be: He whose Hand this shall appear to be, I hope will be entitled to the Reward and his Pardon.*

I am yours unknown.

As soon as I read it, I knew it to be *Sympton's* Letter, so that without any more Words I made a Discovery, and I am of opinion any Man in *England* would have done the same. That League of Friendship which was between us, was certainly dissolved by this Design against me. As for they who talk of solemn Oaths and Protestations, I can assure them there never were any such amongst us; and if there had, no Oath is binding, the keeping whereof is a greater Sin than the breaking of it: An Oath is always administer'd for some laudable Purpose, but such Oaths tend to nothing but the Destruction of our Country.

They were not taken till the Thursday after my Discovery; from the first of their Apprehension, they prepared themselves very devoutly for another World.

Upon their Tryals they appeared both very well dress'd; but, as the Judge observed, their Habit was not correspondent with the Character their Friends gave of them, viz. that they had both been Footmen. *Hawkins* was guilty of one great piece of Indiscretion, that was in desiring that all the King's Witnesses might give their Evidence apart. If he had been innocent, this might have done him some notable Service; but as he was guilty, it was a Confirmation to the

As to the People who swore High-Treason against me, I never saw them in my Life before that time ; if the Court had given any heed to what they said, I could easily have proved my Principles just the Reverse to what they swore. After the Jury had been sent out twice, at last they were found guilty. *Hawkins*, when he came to receive Sentence of Death, upbraided the Judge as partial, a Charge he did not deserve ; for never any Prisoners were used with more Lenity and Justice. They were executed on Monday the 21st of *May*, 1722. I hope their Souls are in Heaven ; and tho my Crimes deserved the same Punishment, I hope Providence has reserved me to a better End : and tho several Persons who have saved their Lives this way, have at last been hanged themselves, I doubt not but to make a better use of my Deliverance. I wish with all my heart that our Story may be a Caution to other young Men, and then I shall get my End in writing these few Sheets ; by which they will find that we enjoyed none of those Sweets which tempt Mankind to unlawful

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Actions. If their Duty to God will not restrain them from such Actions, let our old Proverb, which says, *That Honesty is the best Policy*; for certainly in the end that Proverb proves itself infallibly true. The greatest Means of our Destruction, is setting at nought the first Causes of it; we do not consider how naturally we go from one thing to another, till at last we get to the end of a Rope. I have this Comfort however in my Misfortunes, that I never was concerned where any Murder was done.

Notwithstanding that my Crimes have been great enough, yet those Crimes have received great Aggravations from flying Reports; which I should not have taken notice of, but that I am willing to set the Truth in a clear light. The first thing which surprizes me most, is, that it has been confidently reported by several News-Writers, that my Companions and self were guilty of that horrid Fact of cutting the Woman's Tongue out, because she happen'd to stand by when we robb'd the *Bury-Coach*, and knew us; and that I have acknowledged the same. In the first place, I never acknowledged any such thing; and in the next place, I can prove by things taken away from that Coach in *Whitechappel* the same Morning this Fact is said to be done, that we were not the Men; for doubtless the People to whom these things are restored, would not have been silent, if any such thing had been done by us: besides, this Barbarity was given out to be committed beyond *Epping*, which is ten Miles beyond the Place where we committed the Robbery.

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Another thing is related of me, which I have no occasion to take notice of, any further than that 'tis false, that is, that I have impeach'd 22 Men; for if I had, it had been the greatest Justice in me to impeach all as well as the two I have impeach'd, if any more had been concern'd with me.

I hear one *Rogers* has been committed to *Ailshury-Goal*, and upon my Information; in Justice to the Man, I take this Opportunity to declare I know him not: indeed just after my Commitment, a Man of a very odd Aspect, an Inhabitant of *High-Wiccomb* in *Buckinghamshire*, came to me one Morning, and told me that he had seized this *Rogers*, as answering the Description of *Hawkins*; but finding that *Sympson* and *Hawkins* were taken, he was come to know whether I knew *Rogers*: I answered, No. Upon this my Gentleman of the dismal Countenance look'd very chagrin, and after pausing a little while, ask'd me to drink a Glass of Wine; I accepted his Offer. Accordingly we sat down together, and for some time talk'd on indifferent Subjects; at last he resumed the Discourse about *Rogers*, telling me he believed him to be a Highwayman, and was assured I knew him. I reply'd positively, That I did not. Then he ask'd me, If I had not run many Dangers for very little Money; I agreed I had. Why now, quoth he, suppose a Man should put you in a way to get the half of 40 *l.* with Safety? I told him, I should make very grateful Returns to that Man who should put me in that way. Why then, he added, that it was only rapping heartily against this same *Rogers*, and my Business was done. By this finding the Rogue's Drift, I desired his Ab-

fence, and so forwarded him down Stairs in some haste. I have been the more particular in this Relation, because I would show that sometimes the Men of Reputation are the greatest Villains.

It has also been laid to my Charge, That I made it my frequent Practice to ravish the Ladies whom we robb'd: I cannot think what wise Person trump'd up this Story, it appears to me the most nonsensical one I ever heard; for as we always robb'd the Coaches within four Miles of the Town, and very early in the Evening or Morning, when we had all our Hands full in dismounting the Horsemen who were upon the Road, I cannot see any room for such an Action. Besides, I defy any Person to show that there has been any such thing done by any body within these five Years, which is the longest time I have been in this Town.

The next great Charge is, That I used Cruelties to any Gentleman we robb'd: How false this is, I appeal to several Gentlemen who have been robb'd by us; some in particular, who have been to see me, remember me for the great Civility I showed above my Companions.

The last and most heavy Charge, is, That I am an Atheist, a Blasphemer, and an irreligious Fellow: The two first Characters I utterly disclaim, and challenge any of my Acquaintance to say I ever made use of any atheistical or blasphemous Expressions. As to the last, indeed I cannot say much; for how is it possible that a Man in such a Course of Wickedness could frequent Divine Service, or perform other Duties of Religion? Would it not be the greatest Mockery for a Man to pretend any such thing, when in
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his own Conscience he design'd to commit Robberies immediately after? I think no Man can be truly religious, till he purposes to lead a new Life; *which I am resolutely bent upon, by the Assistance of Almighty God.*

Ralph Wilson.



W Hereas it has been confidently reported, That Mr. MILLS, Master of the Dog-Tavern at Billingsgate, knew of our Robbing the Bristol-Mail: This is to declare, that the same is entirely false; and that he knew nothing of our Circumstances, or Way of Living, or any thing relating to us, only as common Customers frequenting his House.

Ralph Wilson.

FINIS.



